

# Gabelli 2013 - Junior Advising Program

## Guide to Cover Letters



A cover letter is meant to accompany your resume when applying for a job. So, if your resume is supposed to show *how* you're qualified, your cover letter is supposed to show *why* you're interested and *why* they should want you. It's also going to be the first impression many at the company will have of you and your communications skills, so it needs to be great.

With all this in mind, the cover letter is often where many people make their biggest job-hunting error because of one common mistake: they write a form letter instead of a cover letter. If you send off the same cover letter to multiple companies, where only the addressee and the name of companies change, then that is a form letter and it will readily look that way. It's the same thing as when you get a random letter in the mail from a bank or credit card company. It's a form letter trying to sell you something. The only thing particular about it to you is your name. And what do you do with those letters? You put them in the trash. So, how can you expect your reader to do anything different if you send them a form letter?

Now, of course, certain parts of your cover letter will remain the same from letter to letter, especially if you're sending it to companies in the same industry. However, your goal is to make it as dissimilar to a form letter as possible and have as much unique to the company and the position as feasible. With that in mind, here's the basic outline to a cover letter:

1. First off, make sure you're addressing a particular person and that you spell their name correctly. The only thing worse than sending a letter stating "To whom it may concern," is to send one with your contact's name misspelled. Also watch out to correctly have Mr. or Ms. (don't presume to write Mrs.). If you can't tell which is appropriate from their name, see if you can find a reference to them on the web, or just feel free to anonymously call the company to check).
2. The intro section should state who you are, where you found the listing of the position, and explicitly state your interest in applying. This will obviously change from letter to letter, but the outline of it will stay relatively the same.
3. The second section is where you can make the letter unique to the reader. Here you will answer the question of why you're interested in them. This is where you get to talk a bit about the company in

general, their reputation, their history of results, etc. You don't have to write too much (two to four sentences ought to be enough), but it should be enough to show the reader that you've done some research and you're not insulting them by just copying and pasting their name into your letter.

4. The third section should state how you are qualified for the position. You're basically answering the question of why they should be interested in you. This may change slightly from position to position (as you call attention to certain qualities over others for different jobs), but it will most likely stay relatively the same from letter to letter.
5. And then for the last section, you should thank them for taking the time to read your letter, state that your resume is attached for their review, and mention that you're available to answer any questions and/or interview for the position at their leisure.

And that's it. You can play around with the order or those sections as you see fit (although, not by much), and feel free to add more, but just keep it brief. Remember, your readers have to get through possibly hundreds of these letters, so they don't want to read any more than they have to. Your letter should be one page with normal margins and no smaller than font 11 text (with font 12 being preferable).

Last, but not least, make sure it's well-written with no typos. The cover letter is always an easy way for the company to see how good a representative of them you will be. Most people have zero tolerance for typos, so having even one is a quick way to make sure they don't finish reading your letter.

If you'd like someone to review your letter before you send it off, feel free to stop by the Gabelli School's Dean's Office (Faber 359) or the Career Services Center (McGinley 224).

Good luck!

*If you have any questions, please contact your Junior Class Dean,  
Alan Cafferkey – [cafferkey@fordham.edu](mailto:cafferkey@fordham.edu)*